

Minutes of the
Joint Work Study Meeting
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
and
McDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION
Thursday, June 5, 2003
HR Pinnacle Room
7575 E. Main Street

Present:

Parks and Recreation Commission:

Chairperson Shelley Anderson, Vice-chair Leigh Hersey, Commissioners Bill Heckman, Nona Oliver, and Lynn Timmons Edwards

McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission:

Acting Chairperson Don Ruff, Commissioners Dennis Carr, Les Conklin, Erik Filsinger, Laura Fisher, Virginia Korte, Christine Kovach, Howard Myers, Arnold Roy, and Solange Whitehead

Absent: Commissioners David Fortney, Stephen Owens, and Chairperson Darren Smith

Staff Present: Debra Baird, Bob Cafarella, Gary Meyer, Don Meserve, Scott Hamilton, Claire Miller, and Judy Weiss

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Anderson called the meeting to order at 5 p.m. Chairperson Anderson asked all to introduce themselves.

INFORMATIONAL UPDATE REGARDING HIDDEN HILLS TRAIL ACCESS AREA

Bob Cafarella, Preservation Director, and Gary Meyer, Parks/Trails Planning Manager presented a concept plan for the proposed trail access area at Hidden Hills. The access area is divided into two sites located along Via Linda Road, near 144th Street. This access area was discussed at a neighborhood meeting on March 19, 2003 and a public open house on May 22, 2003. The sites were dedicated to the city as part of the development process. The master plan for the access area will be presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission for approval on June 18, 2003. The plan is to have car and trailer parking, ramadas, drinking fountains, landscaping, and signage. Clair Miller, Preserve Manager, distributed a report prepared by city staff analyzing the parking demand. The residents want the amount of parking reduced. Staff has heard the direct opposite and has been challenged to come up with an overflow plan. This design will be the long-term permanent solution for usage. Staff presented a parking analysis to support the need for the level of parking proposed.

Chairperson Anderson asked for any questions from the McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission members.

Commissioner Kovach asked how many parking spaces were determined to be necessary based on the parking analysis. Mr. Cafarella said 53 spaces. Commissioner Kovach asked if the underpass on Via Linda is tall enough to allow riders without dismounting. Mr. Cafarella said it was. Commissioner Kovach asked if the neighbors have asked for parking to be reduced to a certain number. Mr. Cafarella said staff has never heard a number from the neighbors. A lot owner, north and west of the north trailhead site, prefers this site not be built at all. Commissioner Kovach asked what the distance would be from the site to the lot lines on the north. Mr. Meyer said it would be about 80 to 100 feet.

Commissioner Fisher said she is confused about the document distributed from the local group as to issues not being addressed. They came up with 18-20 parking spaces. Mr. Cafarella said that Preserve staff just received this document and there are attachments that were not provided. With respect to the issue of staff not being responsive, Staff has had individual and community meetings. The plans continue to show parking at the north trailhead site so staff thinks that is why the group deems staff as not

responsive. Commissioner Fisher said she couldn't imagine not having that many parking places. If you don't people will park on the street.

Commissioner Kovach said she would be curious to hear comments from the Parks and Recreation Commission. She stated this site would be important for many years. If we reduce the parking we will create more problems. We must also be aware of the neighbors.

Commissioner Korte asked how many spaces there are at Pinnacle Peak Park. Scott Hamilton, Trails Coordinator, said there are 50. Commissioner Korte asked if the plans were 53 spaces at Hidden Hills. Mr. Cafarella said that the plan is about 44 spaces. Mr. Hamilton said there is always an overflow at Pinnacle Peak even with the 50 spaces. Commissioner Korte said this will be similar to 40th Street and Shea into the Phoenix Mountain Preserve, and the peak number is around 50 cars. Mr. Cafarella said that number was during the week. There were more vehicles on the weekends. Commissioner Korte asked if the street could accommodate overflow. Mr. Cafarella said parking on the street will not be permitted. Via Linda is a major bicycle route and it is too narrow to accommodate on-street parking.

Commissioner Myers noted, with the underpass at the top of the street going into the wash area, those parking in the north end of the lot would access the trail further from the homes. Mr. Cafarella said that was correct. Commissioner Myers said this impacts the neighbors less than putting all the parking on the south side of the street. The users will be down in the wash, which provides adequate buffering. He wants to reiterate that every time we have done one of these, the neighbors beat the city down on the parking. While this trail is not Pinnacle Peak, it will get reasonable use, especially from the neighborhood. This is everybody's Preserve and everybody should have access to it.

Commissioner Whitehead noted the elevation on the north site goes up so those living north of it are not looking at the parking lot. Mr. Cafarella said those houses are above the site and there will be trees that buffer the view of the parking lot. Commissioner Whitehead noted that the last thing the residents want is a situation similar to Camelback Mountain.

Commissioner Kovach asked if the stipulation in the Hidden Hills master plan requires parking in both spots. Mr. Cafarella said it identified the two parking locations. Commissioner Kovach said to change the stipulation would require this going back through the process. Mr. Cafarella said that raises a lot of issues. Commissioner Kovach urged staff to find ways to prevent any on-street parking. Keep the neighborhood safe on this narrow street. Once Lost Dog Wash trailhead is built, the publicity will encourage that access area over the Hidden Hills access area.

Commissioner Carr also agrees that the street parking should be mitigated. All sites seem to be woefully lacking in parking. There are going to be many access areas. If one area gets diminished, the result will be the same as the Phoenix trailheads. There will be chaos with idling cars and such.

Chairperson Anderson asked for questions from the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Commissioner Heckman said there are 50 parking spaces at Pinnacle Peak and yet the cars stretch all the way down the road. He asked how many cars are at Pinnacle Peak during peak usage. Mr. Hamilton said it is difficult to count. Any morning both sides of the street will be lined with 40 to 50 cars. Originally staff wanted to build a 100 space lot but it was reduced after the neighbors expressed concerns. If there were 100 spaces it would still be full. Commissioner Heckman said the neighborhood conclusion came from studying many other streets and an average was struck. These areas are undeveloped, un-marketed and un-promoted. The neighbors did a diligent job and put together quite a report. He agrees that we have under-parked our trailheads consistently. This has already gone through the process and the Council has only to award the bid for the design. The Parks and Recreation Commission's role is to review the design elements with input or suggestions. Mr. Meyer said staff would ask the Parks and Recreation Commission to approve the master plan for the site. Commissioner Heckman said the whole decision on the master plan is the one remaining element that will be on the June 18th Commission meeting which will allow for public testimony.

Commissioner Heckman asked why this is a minor trailhead. Mr. Cafarella said when the access area report was prepared the Commission looked at the capture area and with the major access area in the 124th to 128th area, it was felt a minor access would be adequate to accommodate the need. Commissioner Heckman noted that 1 property is closer than the 90ft buffer originally proposed. Mr. Cafarella said there may be more than one. That 90ft. buffer has been a misconception. There is not documentation for the buffer in any support documents. In one drawing there was a 90ft buffer. During platting, SunCor moved the lots around with the result that more lots were closer to the trailhead site.

Commissioner Heckman asked staff to clarify what the neighbors said; "a 4ft wide trail is required for safe use by horses." Sunrise trail is to be 2ft wide. Mr. Hamilton said the trail is planned to be 2ft wide. A primary trail is 4 ft wide and a secondary trail is 2 ft wide. There is a vegetation standard that states there shouldn't be any vegetation taller than 3 feet and/ or in close proximity to the trail. Vegetation should be non-threatening types of plants. Wider sports in the trail are planned and the trail starts off wider then as the user gets away from the trailhead it will narrow. People want narrow trails that meander through vegetation and boulders. Commissioner Heckman asked if there will be provisions for safe usage, even though it is only 2ft wide. Mr. Hamilton said there will be, through signage and education. Commissioner Heckman noted the citizens stated there was a lack of appropriate time to comment on the parking. We are allowing lots of opportunities through the public process.

Vice-chair Hersey asked if the berming will still be installed with this new structure. Mr. Cafarella said there is a natural rise along the south edge, and the intent is to put the parking lot at the lowest existing elevation in the area most suitable to accommodate the parking level. Trees will be a major part of the buffer. The north side has less of a need, as the lots are so much higher than the site. The placement of additional trees will provide more buffering. Vice-chair Hersey thinks the parking is really important. The road is too narrow for anyone to park. She would rather have extra parking than have people parking on the street. She wants staff to keep the neighbors concerns in mind but does not want the amount of parking reduced.

Commissioner Timmons Edwards asked if, after the development deal went through the public process, how did they have an opportunity to move the homes closer without defending that through a public process. Mr. Cafarella said if you look at the MEDCP and what is there and look at subdivision plat, if the City wanted to be tough staff could have said the plat must go back to the way it was shown in the MEDCP. The MEDCP is only a concept. Commissioner Timmons Edwards noted this has been a perpetual problem. She asked if anyone said, "I bought my home and nobody told me." Mr. Cafarella said staff has only heard that from 1 homebuyer. Some saw the sign but hoped it would go away. One individual did not relate the word trailhead with parking.

Commissioner Heckman stated he feels that 45 to 50 spaces are not going to be sufficient. There are streets off Via Linda that are close and people will use those. Mr. Cafarella said there are not that many side streets in the area. Scottsdale has a very active stewardship program. He went on to say he hopes the neighbors will sign up and become involved. The stewards will be out diligently educating users on what they should and should not be doing. We have experienced much success in other areas.

Vice-chair Hersey asked if we anticipate usage being heavy because it is the first access site. Mr. Cafarella said yes, initially there will be more use. However, we are scheduled for 124th Street access area to be planned directly following this site.

Commissioner Kovach asked if Via Linda is a public street and are the side streets public or private. Mr. Cafarella said the City required a gate on the north end of Via Linda. Commissioner Kovach said, to protect the neighbors from parking in their neighborhood, Via Linda will have to have No Parking signs. Mr. Cafarella said other options will be tried first and then signage. Commissioner Kovach asked what is the recourse. Mr. Cafarella said parking does not have to be allowed. Staff is concerned more about parking on Via Linda than the cul de sacs. Commissioner Kovach asked if the side street to the north will be gated. Mr. Cafarella said it would.

Chairperson Anderson asked why there wouldn't be restrooms at the sites. Mr. Cafarella said that has been discussed and given the constraints of the site, restrooms were not considered. Restrooms will be in the next phase of 124th Street and it is preferable to direct people there. If, in the interim, it is an issue, something may have to be considered on a temporary basis. Chairperson Anderson noted she lives in this area and knows it intimately. She rides there frequently and it is suitable and desirable for horses. She shares the same concerns that have been voiced about the amount of parking. There will be a tremendous demand. She would like the City to stay on top of not allowing cars to be parked in trailer spaces or in the turnaround. Parking along the road would block the bike path. We should make sure the number is right and adequate.

Respectfully submitted by Ruth Johnson, Recording Secretary.

Meets established criteria.

Debra Baird
Director
Parks, Recreation & Facilities

Bob Cafarella
Director
Preservation